



Workforce Board

The Workforce Board is a state agency committed to the development of a highly skilled workforce that will sustain Washington's economic vitality. We accomplish this through research, partnership building, and policies designed to serve a diverse population.

WORKPLACE SKILLS

Background

The courts have defined the State's constitutional duty to provide education as going "beyond mere reading, writing and arithmetic." The state must also provide educational opportunities needed to equip children for their role as "...competitors in today's [labor] market."

The Performance-Based Education Act of 1993 eliminated the requirement that high schools provide "program offerings" that teach work skills. Although there is a State Board of Education regulation that indirectly requires local school districts to teach employability skills and occupational skills, it is overshadowed by the focus on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning and academics in general.

In surveys of employers conducted by the Workforce Board, occupational skills and employability skills are the skills most difficult to find in potential employees.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

Require all high schools to provide instruction in employability skills and occupationally specific skills. Standards for such skills should be clear, and methods of assessment appropriate to secondary schools should be used.

Why:

To enable all students to attain a foundation of employability skills and occupational skills needed to successfully progress in their chosen career.

The Workforce Board advocates for the 75 percent of the state's workforce that enter occupations not requiring a four-year degree.

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